



Morning Alert - Friday, September 9, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, TBS, and Fuji TV gave top play to reports on inclement weather in Hokkaido and Tohoku. NTV and TV Asahi led with reports that the baseball team Hiroshima Carp is now one victory away from its first Central League pennant since 1991.

Top stories in national dailies included a plan by the Health Ministry to urge drug companies to include instructions on children's dosage for prescription drugs (Asahi); a GOJ plan to take a two-tiered approach to debate on the Imperial Household system (Mainichi); the start of the Rio Paralympics (Yomiuri); a plan by the central and Tokyo governments to ease regulations for daycare centers (Nikkei); and the East Asia Summit (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

U.S., Japan urge China to abide by arbitration ruling on South China Sea

All papers front-paged reports on the East Asia Summit held in Vientiane on Sept. 8, during which Prime Minister Abe stated that Japan hopes relevant parties will comply with the July arbitration ruling on the South China Sea and that China will keep the promise made by President Xi last year not to militarize the region. President Obama also urged Beijing to abide by the arbitration ruling by saying that it is binding. However, most of the other participants in the summit did not refer to the ruling and stated that the disputes should be resolved by the rule of law. Chinese Premier Li rejected the calls from the U.S. and Japan, saying that territorial disputes should be resolved between the concerned parties.

Asahi wrote that although the South China Sea was a key issue in the East Asia Summit and the U.S. repeatedly stressed the importance of the rule of law, Washington failed to present specific steps to stop China's militarization of the region. The paper speculated that Beijing might take a hardline stance during the transitional period in the U.S. after President Obama's term ends in January.

Yomiuri wrote that it became clear at the East Asia Summit that the strategy of the U.S. and Japan to form a coalition against China with their ASEAN partners has run into difficulty because many of the participants avoided taking clear positions on the South China Sea. Nikkei expressed a similar view, saying that Washington and Tokyo are running out of options to put pressure on China.

U.S.-Japan summit called off

Mainichi wrote that a GOJ source has disclosed that the U.S. and Japanese governments decided to forgo talks between President Obama and Prime Minister Abe in Laos on Sept. 8 due to time constraints. The two nations had agreed to hold a leaders' meeting following the East Asia Summit, but the conference ended about two hours later than originally scheduled. Nikkei added that the two governments will try to arrange a meeting between their leaders on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York later this month or the APEC leaders' meeting to be held in Peru in November.

LDP's Nikai comments on South China Sea at meeting with Vietnamese lawmakers

Most papers reported on LDP Secretary General Nikai's meeting with Vietnamese lawmakers on Sept. 8 in Hanoi. While refraining from criticizing China by name, the senior LDP lawmaker stated that acts that heighten tensions in the region, such as land reclamation and the construction of bases, are absolutely unacceptable. He added that Japan and Vietnam share serious concerns over the South China Sea.

U.S., Japan, South Korea eye foreign ministers' meeting

Nikkei wrote that the U.S., Japan, and South Korea are making arrangements to hold a foreign ministers' meeting later this month in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. The paper conjectured that the officials will mainly discuss North Korea's repeated nuclear and missile tests. If realized, it will be the first foreign ministerial meeting between the three nations in about a year.

Top U.S. envoy on North Korea to visit Japan, South Korea

Thursday evening's Yomiuri wrote that the Department of State announced on Sept. 7 that Special Representative for North Korea Policy Sung Kim will travel to Japan and South Korea on Sept. 10-13. The paper speculated that the U.S. envoy will discuss how to respond to the DPRK's recent ballistic missile launches with his Japanese and ROK counterparts.

Yomiuri separately ran a related story saying that the Ministry of Defense announced that division chief-level defense officials from the U.S., Japan, and the ROK held a teleconference to discuss North Korea's launch of three ballistic missiles into Japan's EEZ on Sept. 5. The officials shared the view that Pyongyang's missile development poses a threat to the peace and stability of the region and agreed to continue to cooperate closely and share information.

North Korea blasts UNSC statement

Thursday evening's Tokyo Shimbun wrote that North Korea's state-run Korean Central News Agency reported that a Foreign Ministry spokesman reacted strongly to the UN Security Council's latest statement condemning Pyongyang's recent launch of three ballistic missiles by saying that the nation categorically rejects it as an intolerable act of infringing on its right to existence, sovereignty, and right to self-defense. The spokesman also said that the DPRK will continue to strengthen its nuclear force.

Trump renews call for increased spending by allies for military bases

Thursday evening's Nikkei and Tokyo Shimbun reported on a security policy speech delivered by Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump on Sept. 7 in Philadelphia, during which he expressed his intention to call on Japan and other U.S. allies to pay the price of the U.S. military's defense of these countries. Trump said that the U.S. has spent a huge amount of money defending such nations as Germany, Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia, and these nations, which have achieved economic success, will fully understand the need to pay additional costs.

ECONOMY

TPP to be top priority in upcoming Diet session

Mainichi wrote the GOJ and the ruling coalition plan to place top priority on the approval of the TPP-related legislation during the extraordinary Diet session to be convened on Sept. 26. They are hoping to pass the bills in the Lower House ahead of the U.S. presidential election on Nov. 8 in order to urge Washington to swiftly obtain congressional approval of the TPP agreement.

POLITICS

Abe comments on domestic issues at news conference in Vientiane

All papers reported on a news conference by Prime Minister Abe in Vientiane on Sept. 8 during which he expressed his administration's readiness to listen to the views of experts concerning the Emperor's desire to abdicate. The premier also commented on work-style reform, saying that the GOJ will study what can be done to achieve equal pay for equal work. Concerning discussions within the LDP on the possibility of extending his term as LDP president, Abe said that it is not appropriate

for him to comment on the issue, adding that he will try to produce results in his remaining two years in office.

